

THOUGHTS
ON
NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE,
SUGGESTED BY
MR. PITT'S SPEECHES
ON THE
IRISH UNION.

*Addressed to the People of Great Britain
and Ireland.*

BY A MEMBER OF THE HONOURABLE SOCIETY
OF LINCOLN'S INN.

Thy Spirit, Independence, let me share,
Lord of the Lion heart, and Eagle eye.

Smollet's Ode.

Non agitur de vectigalibus, non de sociorum injuriis, Libertas
et Anima nostra in dubio est.—*Sallust.*



CONSIDERATIONS, &c.

MR. PITT's speeches in the British House of Commons on the subject of the Irish Union, contain doctrine most pernicious, sentiments most destructive of every thing like rational or well-founded freedom; yet couched in such specious terms, varnished over with such a stream of polished eloquence, as may well serve to mislead the unwary, and entangle the national judgment in the mazes of fancy and rhetoric. In a matter of such import to the welfare of a state, as the surrender of its independence, it did appear to me grossly injurious to the manly sense and spirit of Ireland, to attempt to influence her decision by clamorous invitation, or repulsive warning, from this side the water. We paid her an ill compliment,

pliment, and very unjustly appreciated her worth, if we supposed her incapable of the wise and spirited conduct she has now displayed; if we thought her intelligence needed to be enlightened, or her resolution confirmed, by foreign and external aid: she was fully competent to the decision of the question, and to her alone it ought, in the first instance, to have been left. Far otherwise however is the matter now—Ireland has declared her sentiments; and every man is at liberty to offer his mite of applause, and ennoble his humble opinion by shewing its affinity to her's. Mr. Pitt, on the other hand, having brought the subject forward in contempt of the Irish House of Commons, has made it every Englishman's duty to declare his abhorrence of such a proceeding, and rescue his sentiments from the stain which any resemblance to those of the Minister must indelibly fix upon them. As he has publicly proclaimed his resolution to cherish his favourite system, however adverse it may be to the wishes of either or both nations, to watch every avenue, to model it into every shape, and
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lie in wait for a moment of debility or infatuation, when the deleterious draught may be administered ; it behoves every man who wishes for a continuance of friendly connection with Ireland, to shew that he is not an accomplice of the Minister ; to manifest publicly that he holds in detestation so arbitrary an act as the destruction of a neighbouring independent state because she is weaker than ourselves ; and that whether this object which the Minister aims at is to be accomplished by fraud or force, openly or covertly, he will oppose it by every constitutional means both in word and deed to the utmost of his ability. This now is a duty, my countrymen, you owe to yourselves and to your country—you owe it to England, you owe it to Ireland, to Freedom, Justice, and Humanity.

I own it did afford me some consolation, amidst the deep concern with which I have beheld for some time past the uniform tendency of public measures, it did afford me one solitary spark of joy, to hear Mr. Pitt solemnly abjure all idea of forcible interference with the opinion of the Irish Parliament ; but this joy was soon extinguished,

ed, when I reflected that though open force was not resorted to, secret influence would work its blind and insidious way ; that the siege was only turned into a blockade, and the sap and mine preferred, as surer instruments of destruction than open and avowed assault. Nor is it alone for Ireland that I fear---I have, I own it, a nearer and dearer interest---I fear for England---I fear for my country---I fear lest, if this broad and sweeping system of despotism be once established, the same power that assimilates Ireland to itself, may in the plenitude of its authority assimilate itself to Prussia, or the old monarchy of France. I will not however anticipate what I shall have hereafter to say on this subject ; but having stated, and I trust shewn, the necessity of now closely discussing the question of the Irish Union, a necessity induced by Mr. Pitt's imperious declarations, I will endeavour to reduce under some general heads the circumstances it is necessary to consider, in order to form an accurate judgment on the subject ; in doing which I shall as much as possible avoid all matters of a local and subordinate

subordinate nature, whether of Commerce, Finance, or improved Civilization, both because it is necessary to dispose of the higher and more essential interests, before we can so much as take into consideration these lesser topics, and because it would be easy to shew, that whatever advantages in these points would accrue to Ireland from an union with England, they might be more effectually and permanently obtained, by other measures, and on very different principles. The question most naturally subdivides itself into the following propositions.

- 1st. What are the Advantages resulting to a Country from an Independent Government ?
- 2d. In what Situations can it be prudent in a Nation to surrender that Independence ?
- 3d. Are the relative Situations of England and Ireland such as to make their Union necessary ?
- 4th. Who are competent to decide on this Necessity ?

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These questions I will endeavour to resolve as briefly as possible---And first, as to the Advantages resulting to a Country from an Independent Government.

What Mr. Pitt said of the benefits which Ireland would receive from his proposed Union, may with much greater justice be applied to those which flow from national independence; "they are superior in their nature to any advantage that can appear from accounts, and such as cannot be comprised under them." Indeed I do not know any one real blessing, any thing that actually constitutes the power and happiness of a nation, that may not be traced to the common source of national independence.---Much has always been said by political writers on the means of increasing the *power* of nations; in it has been placed the summum bonum of states; but in my opinion the subject has been treated very injudiciously. A certain degree of power is undoubtedly necessary to every independent nation, in order to guard it from the machinations of its ambitious neighbours; but I firmly believe that every free state possesses

possesses this power, and more than this is detrimental to its welfare. The real strength of a nation consists in the manly spirit of its individuals, and in their attachment to their country, founded on a practical experience of the benefits they receive from it, and from a clear view of those benefits set before their eyes by free and frequent political discussion. Among nations, nearly equal in other respects, wealth may throw some preponderance into the scale, but it does not essentially constitute the strength of a nation. Neither do numerous and well-disciplined mercenary troops, for they may be turned against their employers; nor strong fortifications, for they may become the strength of an enemy. It is only in the hearts and minds of the people that a nation can be really strong; only from national independence that national strength can arise. Very different however is the idea which Kings and Ministers and many political writers entertain of national strength. When they tell you such a measure will increase the national strength, they do not mean that the mass of people will
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receive any actual accession of power or ability ; but that by such means the ruling power will with more facility guide and direct the national strength to such purposes as it sees good. This being what is generally termed the power of a nation, we may easily perceive that its increase is by no means connected with the increase of public prosperity : more particularly so, as it is generally purchased by the surrender of certain rights and privileges on the part of the people which may somewhat embarrass the operations of the executive power ; but which may be nevertheless a very salutary restraint on it. Such an increase of power may be sometimes gained by a surrender of national independence, but never, I maintain, any real and permanent accession of strength. And if it be admitted that to strengthen the hand that conducts the national power, is in itself a considerable advantage, this will be more than overbalanced by the certain loss of vigour and energy in the national character. The hand that wields the weapon may be strengthened, but the weapon itself will

lose its temper and keenness. National independence is the magic spring that gives energy to every faculty of the human mind ; that inspires emulation in commerce, in acts of valour, in every art and every science ; that breathes into the human soul an enthusiastic love of liberty, a fearless determination to suffer death rather than endure slavery. These are emotions which Mr. Pitt wishes not to excite, and well does he aim his blows at their productive causes, National Independence, National Pride. He desires not to form a Nation of Heroes, but of Partisans ; not to raise up a race of Patriots, but of submissive Citizens, to whom the will of the Minister shall be law, and whose deficiency in real strength will to him be more than compensated by docility and ready obedience. These valuable qualities may be obtained most effectually by the sacrifice of National Independence, by eradicating every vestige of National Pride ; but they are qualities, which, while they strengthen the arm of the Minister, weaken and relax the sinews of the Nation ; they are qualities, which

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are poor and pitiful substitutes for those strong, energetic passions which every legislator of a free country should make it his first study to encourage. In despotic states these passions cannot possibly exist; and in countries that have been free, but where freedom is gradually declining, they are as much as possible discouraged, because they are in continual contention with *existing circumstances*, embitter the loss of blessings which are daily vanishing, cause fruitless repining in the people, and endless perplexities to the Minister.

To these passions however, and their parent, Independence, not to her extent of dominion or abundance of wealth, did Sparta owe her Lycurgus and Leonidas; Athens her Solon and Themistocles. To these did Rome, not proud Imperial Rome, but poor and independent Rome, owe her Horatius Cocles, her Decius, her Camillus, her Cincinnatus. What power has so often led an handful of Swiss to victory, over thousands of French, Austrians, and Burgundians? Independence. What inspired the Dutch with the intrepid resolution rather

ther to die on their last dyke, than submit to the tyranny of Spain? Independence—Who so long braved the arms of our first Edward? Wallace and his band of Independent Scots.—Who broke the tyranny of the Stewarts, aided by the money and intrigues of France? British Independence.—And who foiled even British Valour and Resources? Independent America.

A nation however, animated by Independence, and the noble but impetuous passions which may result from it, is a body whose powers it is as difficult to guide, as it is impossible to resist; on it Corruption loses its influence, Force is of no avail.—To guide its counsels requires the total relinquishment of personal vanity, and individual opinion; the dereliction and sacrifice of every favourite system; a ready obedience in conforming to the general will, and an active alacrity and inflexible steadiness in executing it. To a Minister who possesses these qualities, who has self-command, integrity, and capacity to wield them, the passions which Liberty and Independence inspire, are weapons of an incalculable

lable power; but to a weak or wicked, an insufficient or haughty Minister, they are sources of perpetual vexation; they continually oppose his darling plans, and thwart his favourite system; they produce discussion, instead of submission, nay sometimes inspire the people with the audacious belief that they have *more* "to do with the laws than to obey them." These being the consequences of Independence, no wonder the Minister of the present day is anxious to eradicate it. Yet still must he be conscious that its existence is dear to the heart of man, for bold as he is, he scruples to attack it with open and undisguised assault.

Mark how covertly he strikes—National Pride, says he, is laudable and dwells in generous minds, but its present exertion in the people of Ireland is improper—it is a mistaken species of National Pride—but he knows full well, though he does not avow it, that the only improper species is that which he has taken abundant pains to foster; that which with a childish and overweening vanity is attached to its own national customs or prejudices, and
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detests all others, not because they are worse than its own, but because they are different—which founds its claim to superiority on idle and frivolous distinctions; which inspires not a generous and enlightened Patriotism, springing from an actual knowledge of the superior blessings of its parent land, and a glowing wish to increase and perpetuate those blessings; but which fosters the stupid confidence of unverified superiority, which priding itself on advantages whose existence it has not the courage or capacity to ascertain, mixes with an overweening predilection in favour of its own native soil, an illiberal and unmanly prejudice against every other—This is the National Pride which, contented to repose in the shade of its fancied preeminence, scorns all idea of improvement, and in the hour of peril becomes dismayed and panic-struck at finding its bloated form not invulnerable.—This however is the Pride that has by its big and lofty voice thundered menaces of fire and sword, of bankruptcy and famine, against France; that has called
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her troops banditti, her generals adventurers.—This is the Pride that Mr. Pitt has encouraged by precept and example, while nevertheless he dares to insinuate that the National Pride that aspires to be governed by its own laws, to appoint its own Delegates to enact those laws, (who being elected from the people are identified with them in habits and propensities) to preserve inviolate the powers, vigour, and energy of an independent people, is a National Pride that exerts itself on insufficient grounds and without due shew of reason. Not all the Minister's eloquence will however, I trust, convince mankind of this, not all his powers of persuasion will make the Irish shut their eyes to blessings whose existence is as evident, and whose invigorating influence is as powerful, as that of the Sun in his meridian splendor.

Thus I have shewn that the advantages resulting to a nation from an Independent Government may be comprised in the Energy of Character which it bestows on the individuals composing it; whence flows every thing that is great in Arts or
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Arms, in Commerce or Literature.—I am well aware that every Independent Nation is not prosperous; but I am merely stating the possible advantages of Independence, which may however and, too frequently, are ravished from the people of every country by the weakness or, wickedness of those who rule them.

Having stated these advantages, I will now consider in what situation it can be prudent for a nation to surrender its Independence and of course the concomitant blessings.

After having rated these so highly, I can have no hesitation in saying that nothing but imperious necessity can justify a nation in the surrender of its Independence. It never should give it up while it has the power of retaining it. There appear indeed to me only three situations in which National Independence may be sacrificed.

1st. When the waters of the ocean, wide and rapid rivers, a mountainous tract of country, or any other natural barrier, separates a moderate portion of the earth from other nations, if the inhabitants of
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this portion be accidentally divided into two or more distinct governments, it may be adviseable to blend them together so as to form one society; because otherwise each state being debarred by nature from the possibility of extending its dominions externally, would give vent to that restless spirit of ambition, which is natural to the mind of man, in continual inroads on its neighbour, who in his turn would make reprisals; so that a continual state of warfare must take place, totally subversive of every improvement in knowledge and civilization. To render such a country capable of enjoying those blessings which alone can flow from security of person and property, it might be proper for the component parts to form an incorporate union.

2d. When a state, being situated among powerful and ambitious neighbours, whom interest unites for its destruction, finds itself destitute both of extent of territory, and internal or external resources, to preserve its relative situation, it may, in this choice of evils, incorporate itself with that state which enjoys the best government,
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to prevent its falling a prey to that which has the worst.

3d. When a nation, by a long continuance of despotism on one part, luxurious profligacy, venality, and abject servility on the other, becomes so thoroughly and generally debased as to be utterly unable to effect its own political regeneration; the wisest thing it can do, if so much wisdom may be expected to remain in such a state, is to call in the aid of some sounder neighbour, whose hand may pour down the bitter but salutary medicine it has not resolution to administer to itself. In this latter case indeed it is rather the name, than the substance, of Independence of which a sacrifice is made.

These are the only situations in which I conceive Independence ought to be given up.

The next question to be considered is, Whether the relative situations of England and Ireland are such as to render an Union necessary?

I should here content myself with examining whether the situation of these

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countries is such as can be comprised under either of the descriptions I have given above, were it not necessary to obviate an objection that may here be started. It may be said, an incorporate Union of England and Ireland does not imply a surrender of Independence on the part of the latter. This objection having been strongly urged by Mr. Pitt, I shall endeavour to reply to the arguments with which he enforces it.

“ Is it,” says he, “ any rule in practical life, that when two unequal societies coalesce, the members of the less numerous society lose any privileges of Independence which they enjoyed before the coalition ?” I know not whether I state the Right Hon. Gentleman’s words correctly, but I copy them from a ministerial report. And most certainly never was a sentence more artfully constructed ; the skein of political sophistry with which it is enveloped, requires some patience to disentangle. I certainly cannot hesitate to say, that it is *not* an *universal* rule in practical life, that when two unequal societies coalesce, the members of the less numerous society lose
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any *privileges* of Independence which they enjoyed before the coalition; because, in the first place, the benefits of Independence, as I have before stated, are not tangible advantages, are not privileges whose extent can be defined and ascertained, cannot be examined and fixed in a court of law, like the privilege of voting for a rotten borough, or pursuing game over another man's property. The operation of Independence on the body politic, is like that of the animal spirits on the human frame: Let the jaundiced hand of disease dry up this source of vigour and exertion in us, the man has lost neither life, nor limb, neither blood, bones, nor marrow, nothing to which we can even assign "a local habitation;" but he has lost the magic spring that roused every bodily and intellectual faculty, that carried him cheerily through life, lightening his sorrows, and giving a quicker relish to his pleasures. So it is with Independence. The individual who loses his political Independence, relinquishes no privilege perhaps which he can point to with his finger, which he can accurately define,

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or of which he can calculate the value. On the contrary, he may gain some privileges; he may be permitted to carry his merchandize to markets before interdicted to him, he may be allowed to exercise a trade within the verge of cities which before were shut against him, and various other such like privileges; but he has lost the stimulus that should prompt him to make full use of these privileges, he has lost the noblest incentive to exertion; he is the eunuch who has the privilege of guarding the seraglio, whose pleasures he wants power to taste. Away then with this artful and delusory reasoning---let us not imagine because a man loses no actual *Privilege* when he forfeits his Independence, that he does ^{not} lose a *Right* dearer than all the artificial privileges which Government can bestow.

“ But look,” says the Premier, “ at the Nations of Europe, and it will be seen that if this principle had been acted upon by the forefathers of the present generation, not one of them could have existed.” If this means any thing, if it be not a mere vapour

vapour arising from that stream of words with which the Right Hon. Gentleman not unfrequently overflows his meaning, it can only mean that their present forms of government could not have existed. Here give me leave to ask where would have been the mischief had they indeed never existed? Would humanity have lost any thing by the non-existence of the despotism of Prussia, or Russia? Would the progress of knowledge and virtue have been impeded for want of such guides as the inquisitorial governments of Spain and Portugal? Has the true policy of Nations, and the theory of Legislation, have the principles of Justice or Freedom received much advancement by the establishment of the Germanic body? Have the Arts and Sciences been peculiarly fostered by the tyranny of the Ottoman Porte? I will not insult common sense by requiring an answer to these questions, but will return with Mr. Pitt from his vague excursion over the Continent of Europe, to our own island, to Great Britain.

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Most assuredly I do not mean to go though the history of "Unions that have distinguished our own country"---I will not enter into the mazes of the Saxon Heptarchy, or the early history of our country, before the Northern and Western parts of England were united to it. I will only observe that Union is not a sovereign panacea to restore the broken strength of a nation—for England was certainly as free from internal disturbance, and more so from foreign invasion, during the Heptarchy than after Egbert's Union. With regard to the statutes of Henry VIII. which united Wales more closely with England, it is one of those cases, in which Union is not connected with the loss of Independence---But why? Because the Welch had no independence to lose---they had no distinct legislative body---they cherished perhaps some few customs and usages different from their English brethren---they might sigh with fond regret over the memory of traditional independence---they might affect to jingle the name in their ears, but the substance, the reality, had

had been long, long lost to them and their ancestors.

The Minister proceeds in a triumphant tone to ask, "Is Yorkshire less independent, because she is subjected to the general controul of the Members of England?" But let the Right Hon. Gentleman give me leave to ask him a question in my turn--- Were Yorkshire by the omnipotence of Parliament declared an independent state, could any parliamentary decree make her really so? I will take the liberty of anticipating the Rt. Hon. Gentleman's answer--- It must be in the negative. When the law gives any thing, it gives every thing necessary to its enjoyment. But could an Act of Parliament give Yorkshire wisdom and valour, fleets, armies, resources, and extent of territory? Could it hammer out the four or five thousand square miles, of which it is composed, into as many leagues? Unless it could do this, unless it could give every thing necessary to its enjoyment, it could not give Yorkshire Independence.--- Yorkshire is precisely in that situation wherein Independence may prudently be relinquished,

relinquished, indeed where it cannot be preserved. She is surrounded by a country, against whose power she could not combat; she is destitute of internal and external resources; she is destitute of extent of territory; and therefore, as Mr. Pitt will one day or other resign his office, when the returning reason of the people renders it untenable, so Yorkshire might prudently relinquish that Independence which it was not in her power to retain. I here foresee the triumphant clamour with which my own artillery might be pointed against me, the attempt that might be made to turn my own examples of Athens and Sparta against my reasoning. The extent of Laconia, may it be said, was less than that of Yorkshire; why therefore may not the latter be independent? To this I answer, that the independent states of Greece were doubtless smaller than Yorkshire and many other provinces of modern Europe. But we should recollect, that great and small are relative terms, and that in respect to each other, the several states of Greece were not small, but well proportioned; and

and therefore their power in that respect was sufficiently balanced internally ; that besides that energy and vigour of character which I have described as the peculiar feature of Independence, there subsisted among the several states a fœderal, not *an incorporate* Union, which gave them sufficient power to repel external hostilities. The case therefore is by no means parallel ; and I should no more think of calling Yorkshire or the counties palatine less independent for having surrendered the empty name and husk of independence, than I should of advising Lord Bolton to erect a separate principality, and affect independence, in the Isle of Wight.

But in fact, though I have thus taken notice of them, that they might not stand unanswered, no just arguments can be drawn from the rules established by our remote ancestors. They were, alas ! the very reverse of the present age—they were animated by a most unconquerable spirit of liberty, but utterly unacquainted with the forms in which it was necessary to entrench it, from the attacks of ambitious men ; we

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on the contrary are admirably versed in all the forms of civil liberty, but too feebly inspired by its real essence and spirit. If we draw our examples, in questions of legislature, from days of yore, when political rights were obscurely comprehended, when the constitution was illy defined, and prerogative usurped the functions of law; what destructive errors shall we not incur? To go only to the reign of Elizabeth; would the Right Hon. Minister produce as a precedent the conduct of that Sovereign towards her Parliament? or the abject servility of the Parliament towards her, as a rule for the deportment of the present House of Commons? I trust he would not, and he must therefore give me leave to say, that whatever instances he can bring of union or disunion effected by our remote ancestors, are not in point, and that the present question must stand or fall by its own intrinsic merits or demerits. And I think I may now venture to answer the question, whether “when two unequal societies coalesce, the members of the less numerous society lose any *privileges* (taking the word in its most extensive

extensive sense) of Independence," thus : When two unequal societies coalesce, and the lesser possesses an independent legislature, the members of that lesser society do unquestionably lose the privileges, rights, and benefits of Independence; and it is only an inability to retain the enjoyment of these advantages, induced by one of the three situations I have before described, that can justify a nation in the surrender of its Independence.

" If indeed," says Mr. Pitt, " there existed a country, which has within itself the due means of military protection, the resources of commerce and manufactures, and which possesses a constitution of its own, distinct and different from that of its neighbours, such a country I can well imagine may be jealous of becoming, even by the act of its own Government, annexed to a larger country." The Right Hon. Gentleman's imagination needs not to be very prurient to form such a conception as this. Let us hear him a little further. " If however a country without the means of defence in itself, and so far from being dis-
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joined or separated from, or contrasted with its adjoining nation, whose laws and whose language are the same; who whatever it has to boast valuable or important has borrowed it from that neighbour; if such a country is threatened and its existence endangered by a foreign enemy, I would now ask whether it is not in a situation to wish to unite and incorporate itself with another; whether Ireland is not in that situation, and whether Great Britain is not that country with which she should unite?"

To bring this matter as quickly as possible to issue, I shall at once deny that Ireland is in the situation here described.— I maintain that Ireland does "possess within herself due means of military protection," the resources of Commerce and Manufactures, and a Constitution of her own, distinct, if not different, from that of her neighbour country. An Island 300 miles in length and half as much in breadth, deeply indented with commodious bays, and intersected with numerous rivers and lakes; abundantly productive in every necessary article of food, both vegetable and animal,

animal, advantageously situated for commerce, possessing established manufactures of different sorts, and containing three millions of inhabitants, is this a country without means of defence? Let me not be afflicted with an idea so degrading to human nature, as to suppose that three millions of human beings, placed in a mild and temperate climate, in an highly fertile soil, in a situation defended from encroachment by the natural barrier of the Ocean, are so totally destitute of spirit or capacity, so deficient in fortitude, knowledge, and address, as to be unable to provide for their own independent maintenance; but must cling for support, and beg to be cherished by a neighbouring nation. Let not Ireland's insular situation be forgotten; let it not be passed over in silence, that Nature's finger has as it were traced out the boundaries of an independent country, has raised the "green Isle" above the bosom of the seas, has stored her with every production necessary to the life of man, and studded her with capacious ports to receive and protect her commerce. Let her not be wanting

ing to herself in prudence, let her but possess a reasonable portion of courage, enterprise, and capacity, and I do maintain that she possesses within herself every requisite to form an independent government. And what reason have we to doubt that she possesses these qualities? Did her associated Volunteers, or do her numerous sons who, both by sea and land, are now fighting our battles, leave us room to question her Courage? Do her manufactures now rapidly improving, tho' but just escaped from British shackles, allow us to doubt her spirit of commercial enterprise? Or the various ornaments she has added to every department of literature not convince us of her genius and capacity? Far be the unworthy thought from every Englishman's breast, that Ireland is deficient in any of these qualifications, or that she does not possess within herself "the means of defence and independence."

But it seems "every thing she has to boast valuable and important has been borrowed from her neighbour," and that kind neighbour, unwilling to overwhelm her
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with the weight of obligation, is desirous of borrowing in his turn a few of her valuable commodities ; to borrow her resources to bolster up his palsied finances, to borrow her parliament, to borrow her independent legislature. But is it true that she is indebted to us for whatever she possesses valuable or important ? Her usages, laws, and constitution are undoubtedly similar to our own ; but why are they so ? Why are they, as Mr. Pitt says, an imperfect model of those of England ? Because she has been under the open and direct management of British Ministers and British Councils. And have we been open-handed and liberal to her of those blessings we have ourselves enjoyed ? Oh ! no. We have treated her with the offals and refuse of our own constitution, and like an humble dependent presented her with our cast-off suits of liberty. Under all the discouragement we have given her, she has still prospered and continued independent ; we have therefore surely reason to conclude that had she been kindly assisted, or even left to the unfettered operation of her own energy, she
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would have rendered complete that “imperfect model of the British constitution” she now possesses, without incurring the *great* obligations she now owes to England.

It must too appear strange to every one that Ireland having, during the lapse of several centuries, continued to be an independent state, should now, when her commerce, manufactures, and resources have visibly improved, all at once be found incapable, in her present ameliorated state, of supporting that Independence, which she maintained while in a distressed condition. This is an ænigma; but Mr. Pitt presents us with a key to it. It seems “she is threatened, and her existence endangered, by a foreign enemy.” And to avert this danger, no other expedient can be devised but an incorporate Union with England. Alas! this answer of the oracle of St. Stephen’s is, like most other oracular responses, dreadfully ænigmatical. How a pressing and imminent danger can be averted by a measure whose arrangement and adoption must be slow and progressive, requires greater talents than mine to discover. It was accordingly

cordingly reserved for those of the Minister. I can easily see why the situation of two countries, such as Great Britain and Ireland, exposed to the attacks of a vigilant and active foe, might make a federal union, by which each should agree to assist the other, eligible and necessary; but how an incorporate union, the very terms of which it must take time to discuss, and which, even if it were a measure of utility, must agitate and disturb the passions and prejudices of many, must create some degree of division and dissatisfaction in the people, how this can be resorted to as a mode of preparation against a sudden attack, does I own raise in my mind the greatest astonishment. Indeed I cannot entertain so low an idea of Mr. Pitt's ability as to believe that this ostensible reason is the true and actual one that influences him in this measure; more particularly so as the instance that he brings in proof of the insufficiency of the connexion between the two countries, is founded on an event which is not only totally unconnected with the danger proposed to be repelled by this measure, but such as may

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never happen again. I allude to the case of a Regency.

In the course of between two and three centuries, we have seen one instance of this kind; in this lapse of time we have beheld an event once take place, by which the connexion between the two countries might for a time have been relaxed; and from this solitary circumstance, what conclusion is drawn? Not that we should hereafter, at a due season of leisure, when peace and repose give us the opportunity of examining minutely the faulty parts of our system, and endeavouring to repair them, so as to provide even against remote contingencies, as far as we possibly can foresee them; not that we should then take this matter into consideration, and with mature and deliberate judgment provide against an evil, the possibility of which but exists: No, this is not the conclusion which the Minister draws; but that in the midst of “the most important, the most momentous conflict in which this country was ever engaged—a conflict in which Great Britain is distinguished as making the only stand against

gainst the common enemy ;"—at a time when the embers of a deep and alarming rebellion are by no means extinguished ; when we can with difficulty provide resources to meet daily emergencies ; that this is a time when it is prudent and necessary to agitate the public mind, to awaken into activity every latent spark of jealousy and discontent, to dismiss from our contemplation the pressing and instant dangers with which we are surrounded, and bend the whole force of our understanding towards providing a remedy for a distant and contingent evil. No, little as I respect the Right Hon. Gentleman's political theory or practice, I know his talents to be too great, his judgment too logical, to draw such an inference as this in reality ; his sophistry may enable him to elicit some such *verbal* conclusion, from his own arguments ; but any such *mental* deduction I am convinced he never did make.—“ Les demi-politiques,” says Helvetius, “ faute d’embrasser une assez grande étendue de temps, sont toujours trop vivement frappés d’un danger present.”—Our heaven-born Minister, reversing the
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error of these "demi-politiques," is so deeply affected by the danger of the present contest, yet so anxious to provide against the most remote contingencies, that he wishes to be prepared with a remedy for a disease, with which the body politic may never be afflicted.

This cannot be his true reason for pressing the measure; and if in our efforts to discover it, we accurately examine his speech, we shall find it peeping out amidst the statistical accounts of the financier. It appears that he has bestowed much attention on the commerce, the manufactures, the agriculture, the resources of Ireland; these with his usual ingenuity he has discovered not to be made the most of; and so far I readily concur with him; and further, will even allow that an Union such as he proposes would certainly have a temporary effect in improving the general state of the commerce and agriculture of Ireland. But it cannot be necessary to make use of the Right Hon. Gentleman's political rack to screw up Ireland to what he conceives to be the acmé of prosperity, unless our
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utmost endeavours to find some less forcible remedy should prove vain and fruitless.

Much has been said of the beneficial effects that have accrued to Scotland from its Union with England ; and I do not deny that Scotland has been in a state of progressive improvement since the Union. But we should recollect that in a smaller space of time, America has improved in a proportion still more rapid without any such efficient cause, and indeed owing to a cause diametrically opposite. And farther, I very much doubt whether whatever benefits Scotland has received, have not been more than balanced by correspondent and concomitant evils. She now unquestionably raises more bolls of oats and other grain than formerly ; but does she produce such high-spirited and intrepid characters as of old ? I fear this production has declined with her Independence : and I much doubt whether ever again she will have to boast of a William Wallace, or even a Montrose, or a Dundee. The example of America, which I have cited above, clearly demonstrates, that there are other means of promoting the welfare

welfare of a state besides uniting with a neighbour kingdom ; and I would most seriously advise Ireland to profit by the lesson Mr. Pitt has given her. To shew him that the Irish are capable of providing remedies for those defects under which they now labour, without his interference ; to manifest to him, and to the world, that they will no longer be actuated by a narrow spirit of party, or religious intolerance ; that they will attend to the afflicted condition of the lower classes of society ; that they will give them the means, and encourage the practice of industry ; and, by so doing, raise up to the nation at large a vast increase of strength and prosperity. Let them do this speedily and effectually, and they may despise that statement of advantages which the Minister so pompously enumerates as conferred on Ireland by this country.

Far be it from me to endeavour to weaken the good understanding, that I pray ever may subsist, between Great Britain and Ireland ; but I do contend that this statement of the Minister deserves contempt, because
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it cannot but appear to every Irishman as a sort of threat to deprive him of those few advantages he now enjoys, unless he consents to this union.

But though it may not be consonant to the schemes and private views of the Minister, it must ever be the true policy of this country to promote, by every means in her power, the welfare of the sister kingdom. I will not follow Mr. Pitt thro' the detail he gives of the commercial intercourse between the two countries ; both because I take the question up on higher grounds than can be included in any detailed account, and because he has, from his situation, official advantages, and means of information, of which I cannot avail myself, and therefore could not argue the question with him on fair and equal ground. I will therefore only mention one circumstance, to shew how necessary it is for this country always to adopt a generous and liberal policy with respect to the trade of Ireland. It must always be an object of the utmost importance to us, to prevent foreign nations, and particularly France, from a power of entering
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into a competition with us in the sale of woollen manufactures. This can best be effected by encouraging the manufacture of Irish woollens; and accordingly in 1789 the royal assent was given to the taking off the restraint laid on Irish woollen exports; and the beneficial effects of this were felt immediately; for in less than a month after taking off this restraint, an export-entry was made at the custom-house of Dublin, of 1300 yards of serge, for a foreign market. Before this permission to export their woollen manufactures, great quantities of Irish wool found its way to France; which must have been attended with the most pernicious effects to the woollen trade of this country. Because the French cannot manufacture their own wool by itself, it being too short and coarse, or in the language of manufacturers neither fine in the thread nor long in the staple. This obliges them to have recourse to the wool of Ireland; assisted by one pack of which they are enabled to manufacture two of their own. In this instance then we clearly see that the interest of both countries is the

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the same, and I have no doubt but that in every respect an open, liberal mode of conduct towards Ireland, will be found most conducive to the prosperity of England. This being the case, there is every reason to conclude that Ireland is able by her own wisdom, by her own powers, by means of the relative situation in which she now stands to this country, to effect in a more dignified, permanent, and effectual manner all those improvements in civil polity, manufactures, agriculture, and commerce, which are proposed to be extended to her by the Union, without the alloy of the concomitant evils with which it must be attended, Some one perhaps may be induced to ask, What are these mighty evils I so much apprehend for Ireland? After what I have stated concerning the blessings attendant on Independence, perhaps it would be sufficient to rest my answer on the certain loss she must sustain on that head—but there are other circumstances to be taken into the account.

It is a notorious fact that the resources of

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Great Britain are so completely overstrained, by the severe and continual pressure of a long and expensive war, that tho' new and unusual modes of taxation have been resorted to, they do not by any means appear adequate to the pressing necessities of the state. An ordinary mind might have been appalled, and sunk under the accumulated difficulty. Our political Archimedes however only requires footing, to tear from its foundations the political world of Ireland ; he seems determined to follow Mr. Burke's advice, and if he falls, " to fall amidst the ruins of the civilized world."

Irishmen ! give him not an inch of ground whereon to fix the fulcrum of his financial lever ; whose gigantic arm will draw from your fields, from your cities, from your farms, from your warehouses, sums greater indeed than you raise at present, not however for your advantage, but for his own. " Sic vos non vobis vellera fertis oves." Having exhausted that country, of which he has so long had the direction, like the roving Tartar, he wishes to remove himself, and
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his devouring herd of taxes, to a new and unexhausted pasture; he will perhaps for his own advantage condescend to cultivate and fertilise the soil, but dearly will he make you pay for those benefits, whose unbought, unalloyed effects ye may by due exertion procure for yourselves.

These conclusions, however I might have formed them in my own mind, I might perhaps not have thought myself warranted in proclaiming, but for certain passages which have lately occurred, during debates on the subject of the Irish Union, in the British House of Parliament. I there find the Minister, replying to the doubts of an Hon. Member, who seemed to think that the 7th* Resolution laid before the House
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* "7th Resol. That for the like purpose it would be fit to propose, that the charge arising from the payment of the Interest or Sinking Fund for the reduction of the Principal of the Debt incurred in either kingdom before the Union, shall continue to be separately defrayed by Great Britain and Ireland respectively. That, for a number of years to be limited, the future ordinary expences of the United Kingdom in Peace or War shall be defrayed by Great Britain and Ireland jointly, according

by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, was too indulgent to Ireland, and that it did not precisely express that an identity of taxation should take place between the two countries, as soon as the Union should be effected—His answer is to this effect: “That however proper and expedient it might be to fix, at some distant period after the Union, such an identity of taxation, yet for the present it would be wise and politic not so far to offend existing local prejudices as to require immediately an equal proportion of burthens to be sustained by Ireland, but on the contrary, as he had remarked upon another occasion, to exact for the present only that proportion which Ireland had hitherto paid in time of peace or war.” This express declaration of the Minister requires no comment: It fully declares that the silly and ridiculous local prejudices, which ren-

cording to such proportions as shall be established by the respective Parliaments previous to the Union; and that after the expiration of the time so to be limited, the proportion shall not be liable to be varied, except according to such rates and principles as shall be in like manner agreed upon previous to the Union.”

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der Irishmen unwilling to have their pockets drained by heavy and repeated taxes, will be complied with, until their own independent legislature, which might humour the people in these foolish whims, is annulled and destroyed; then the mask, no longer useful, will be suddenly dropped, and bare-faced, hideous Taxation stare them in the face. Here then is proof positive that there is one system to be ostensibly held out, and another to be acted upon; to oppose the operation of which, will her proportion of Representatives be an adequate security? Far from it. Their feeble voices will be lost in the overpowering majority of an Imperial Parliament; and Ireland, governed by men who are not identified with her in habits, education, local wants, or prejudices, cannot entertain any reasonable hopes of having her propensities and interests attended to with the same tender concern, as when governed by men whose propensities and interests were identified with her own. Her sons, nurtured in her bosom, must naturally feel a readier desire to gratify her wishes, and be better judges of what will conduce

conduce to her prosperity, than strangers and aliens ; who ignorant of her wants, inattentive to her requests, will consider her interests only as secondary to their own ; and anxious to relieve themselves, will heap taxes on her without due consideration of her ability to defray them. “ It is of importance,” says Montesquieu, “ that he who is to govern has not imbibed foreign maxims : these are less agreeable than those already established. Besides, men have an extravagant fondness for their own laws and customs : *These constitute the happiness of every community, and, as we learn from the histories of all nations, are rarely changed without violent commotions, and great effusion of blood.*” Sp. of Laws.

For the various reasons that I have here detailed, and which I will now briefly enumerate, I feel myself authorised to conclude, that an Union with Great Britain cannot be necessary, but must be pernicious to Ireland—I draw this conclusion : Because the loss of Independence is in itself so great an evil to a state, as cannot be justified by any other cause than imperious necessity :

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Because this necessity does not exist with respect to Ireland, she being by her insular situation, her convenient ports, her fertility, and resources, fully capable of, and peculiarly well adapted for, the maintenance of an independent government :

Because the arguments adduced to prove that Ireland, in forfeiting her independent legislature, does not forfeit her independence, are frivolous and absurd, being founded on instances of countries and petty states which, at the time of their incorporation, did not possess an independent legislature :

Because, both in theory and practice, Ireland has shewn herself fully capable of repelling, in her present condition, dangers such as she is now threatened with ; and because the danger which is urged as likely to ensue, from want of identity between the two countries, is founded on an event which may never take place :

Because a measure, necessarily slow in producing its effects, can never be an adequate remedy for any instant and pressing danger :

Because, even if the Union were of utility,

lity, the present is a most improper season for pressing it :

Because all the advantages, which are likely to result from an Union, may be more certainly and effectually obtained by the wisdom of her own independent legislature ;

Because there is no security for Ireland (after the surrender of her independent legislature) that she will not, but on the contrary great reason to believe that she will, be loaded with heavy and enormous taxes :

And because it would be imprudent voluntarily to submit to the guidance, or place confidence in the professions, of a Minister, who, even in the outset of this measure, has shewn and declared that he is capable of holding out one system, and acting on another.

For these reasons I conclude, that an Union with Great Britain must be pernicious to Ireland. Let us now take an hasty view of its consequences with regard to England.

It is somewhat curious, that in the common conversation, which such a question

as the present daily engenders, it should happen, that almost all the defenders of the measure consider it as a benefit conferred on Ireland at the expence of the people of this country : “ They wonder how the Irish can be so blind to their own interest as to refuse such an offer ; if indeed the people of this country were unwilling to admit such a number of poor and needy creatures to a chance of participating in their wealth and commerce, it would not be very surprising ; it could not be thought odd in the people of England, as they can get nothing by the business.” These are the common and every-day arguments (if such they may be called) that are bandied about in conversation by the defenders of the measure. Those who disapprove of it, on the contrary, generally speaking, think it a measure, which militates strongly against the interest of both countries ; and possibly there may be a third party, but it is a small one, who think it beneficial to both countries. I have stated above pretty fully its inexpediency with regard to Ireland, let

us take a brief and cursory view of it with regard to England.

I will again quote an author, whose authority must always carry with it decisive weight—Montesquieu. In his *Spirit of Laws* he says, “ A great state becoming accessory to another, is itself weakened and even weakens the principal. A monarchical state ought to be of moderate extent. Should it exceed this limit, the sudden establishment of unlimited power is a remedy which may prevent a dissolution ; but how dreadful the remedy that after enlargement of dominion, opens a new scene of misery. Rivers hasten to mingle their waters with the sea, and monarchies lose themselves in despotic power.” England however has not yet arrived at the first term of this rapid and disastrous course. --She is not yet a pure Monarchy. But I leave it to every unprejudiced mind to judge, how far this great and sudden increase to the already enormous influence of the Crown, will tend to set it above all controul and restriction. Whether the overgrown power
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of the Minister, will not receive such an accession from this measure, as may give every honest and upright mind just reason to fear for his rights and liberties.

In vain will it be urged that Ireland will send her Representatives to an Imperial Parliament, whose numbers being increased by this measure, will make it more difficult for the Minister to influence their decisions. For the refutation of this argument I appeal to the good and manly sense of my countrymen, to their knowledge of an indisputable and uncontroverted fact. That the majority of the Representatives of this country is returned by one hundred and fifty four individuals ; which is of course a very partial and inadequate Representation of the People ; that this has been stated and proved in Parliament ; that repeated petitions have been presented for a redress of this grievance, which is considered by the people of England as one of the most severe, amongst the many, under which they labour. Now this being the case, and the Representation of the people of Ireland being notoriously not one whit more pure

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or perfect, to establish an Imperial Parliament formed by the junction of two bodies so constituted, what is it but to extend, still more widely, that pernicious system to whose evil influence we trace the source of all our burthens and all our miseries.

The consideration of this circumstance must confirm the truth of what I have before stated; that it is not the actual strength of either nation that will be increased by an Union, but the facility of directing that strength—in other words the power of the Minister. Indeed in the warmth of argument, this truth half peeps out amidst the words of the Right Hon. Gentleman. “It is clear,” says he, “that in proportion as you concentrate the strength of an empire, the better you will be able to *direct* its united strength towards that point which may be most liable to attack.” But what point is there at present more liable to attack, more open defenceless and prostrate, than the rights, liberties, and immunities of Englishmen? What security have we that if the Minister once possesses the power, he will not
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possess the inclination to subvert them? And what measure can be more calculated than the present to give him that power? I entreat every one who has read the Minister's speeches on the Union, to read those parts of them, which refer to an increase of strength to the empire, once again with this amendment. Wherever the "additional power of the British Empire," "the consolidated strength of the Empire of both Kingdoms," or such like words occur; strike out the word "Empire," and in its place read "Minister," and you will arrive at the true import of the sentence. How and where is this addition to the national strength to be generated? Not even Mr. Pitt has attempted to prove that the individual power of England, considered as a separate country, will be increased by it—nor has he even proved that the strength of Ireland, individually considered, will be raised by it—but it is an ideal creature of his own creation that will be benefited by it—the Empire. Which is to derive its increase of power, not from an accession of strength to the individual countries

'countries that compose it, but from their Union—as in chymistry, the mixture of two cold liquors will produce heat. Without however entering into the nature of this Empire of Mr. Pitt's, it is sufficient to have, as I trust, proved that “the relative situations of England and Ireland are such as make an Union *not* necessary to either, but pernicious to both.” Supposing however I should have failed in my proof—supposing a necessity for this Union may exist—we come to the question “Who are competent to decide on this Necessity?”

I am perfectly aware, that this is “a question of extreme responsibility to those who bring it into agitation.” I use Mr. Pitt's own words; and I hope he does not mean to confine the “responsibility” to one side of the question only—not to make it dangerous to those only, who following the course he has laid down, find themselves at issue with him on the subject. I trust having as it were thrown down the gauntlet, he does not mean to encounter the antagonist who wishes to contend with him in an open and manly contest, with
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the Attorney-General at his back ; resembling those Scythians, who armed with a javelin and a *rope*, entangled, in an insidious noose, the adversary with whom they were unable to cope in deeds of strength and valour.

Being therefore led by the Minister to the discussion of a subject, on which I should otherwise have been silent, I trust the Rt. Hon. Gentleman will allow a fair and open course to those arguments which he himself has provoked.

He states most unreservedly, that the Sovereign Power does not remain, in abeyance, with the People :

That such a principle can make no part of any system of human jurisprudence :

That more particularly it makes no part of the Constitution of England.

I will request my readers patience and attention during the examination which I shall give each of these points ; in doing which, if I cannot hold out to him any hopes of being entertained with such effusions of genius and talent as characterise every production of the Minister, I can at least

least promise him a thorough adherence to truth and moderation. “ Si ce livre est mauvais, c'est parceque je suis *sot*, & non parceque je suis *frippon*.” Indeed this moderation I shall observe as well for my own sake as his: It is at all times conducive to the reputation of an author; at the present a more than usual portion is absolutely necessary to his personal safety. Mr. Pitt may be raised above the necessity of this precaution; he may safely substitute abuse for argument, and stigmatise as “ the enemies of their race,” those who differ from him in political opinions. I have no such privilege, and shall therefore, as the best and surest method, attempt to prove, not by assertions of my own, but by proof, drawn from unquestionable authorities,

1st. That, both in theory and practice, the Sovereign Power has in several systems of Human Jurisprudence been in the People.

2d. That this principle was acted on at the Revolution, and is therefore a part of the Constitution of England.

I really am at a loss how to understand the first position of the Rt. Hon. Minister;
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it cannot be meant as generally and universally true ; neither can it refer to ancient or to modern times ; if it have any precise reference, it can only be to those periods of tyranny and anarchy when the nations of Europe groaned under the weight of feudal law.

I do not think it necessary to retrace what every schoolboy reads concerning the states of Greece—it cannot be worth while to insist on the example of Rome. Surely every one must be convinced, that in these states the sovereign power was especially recognised as residing in the people. I will by no means enter into the history of either nation ; but will content myself with quoting a strongly apposite passage from Montesquieu. “The senate,” says he, “had no share in the election of Servius Tullius ; he caused himself to be proclaimed by the *people* ; he resigned the power of judging civil causes, reserving none to himself but the criminal ; he laid all affairs *directly before the people*.”—“Tarquin would neither be chosen by the senate or the people ; he considered Servius Tullius as an usurper,

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and took the crown as an hereditary right. He destroyed most of the senators ; those who remained he never consulted ; nor did he even so much as summon them to assist at his decisions. Thus his power increased, but the odium of that power received a new addition, by usurping also the authority of the people, without whom, and even against whom, he enacted several laws. The three powers were by these means united in his person ; but the people, at a critical minute, RECOLLECTED *that THEY were legislators, and there was an end of Tarquin.**

I have chosen to draw my example from Rome while she was under a regal government, because I can scarce believe that any one would venture to deny the sovereignty of the people during the Republic ; and I think the above instance is more particularly in point, as it not only proves that this principle was acknowledged under the Kings of Rome, but that the denial of it caused the destruction of the regal government.

* Spirit of Laws, b. xi. c. 12.

If we turn from Rome, and take a view of our remote Germanic ancestors, we shall there find the sovereign power expressly stated as residing in the body of the people. As the origin of the feudal system is traced to the nations of Germany, and as, in the infancy of this system, the sovereign power will be proved to have resided in the nation at large, no argument will remain, for those who wish to support a contrary principle, from the corruptions of the feudal constitutions. Let us listen to Tacitus.* “De minoribus rebus principes consultant, de *majoribus omnes*. Ita tamen, ut ea quoque, *quorum penes plebem arbitrium* est, apud principes pertractentur, Ut turbæ placuit considunt armati. Mox rex, vel princeps, prout ætas cuique, prout nobilitas, prout decus bellorum, prout facundia est, audiuntur, auctoritate suadendi magis quam jubendi potestate. Si displicuit sententia fremitu adspernantur: sin placuit, frameas concutiunt.” I appeal to the plain common sense of every man, whether it is

* Tacitus, de Moribus Germanorum, c. xi.

possible to form an idea of power more fully vested any where, than Tacitus here describes it to have been in the People of Germany? Can there be a more full, decisive, or more animated description of a popular assembly than this? where the people at large decide by acclamation, questions which it was acknowledged they were competent to discuss and determine. When I cast my view towards the early history of the Saxons in this country; when I there see numerous traces of plenary power vested in the people; when I find it the opinion of a most judicious antiquary,* that in the Anglo-Saxon courts of judicature every free-man had a right to attend, and give his vote, and that the question was determined something after the manner of their German progenitors, either by acclamation or shew of hands; when farther I observe that our Anglo-Saxon monarchs did frequently,† in the preamble to their codes of law, express that they were enacted by

* Vide Hicckes's Dissert. Epist.

† Vide Wilkins's L. L. Anglo-Sax,

the advice, and with the consent, of those among the people who were most distinguished for wisdom; I cannot but think that such traces of a popular government in an age of ignorance and barbarism, do shew most strongly that there always existed a tacit acknowledgment of this inherent right. The great and illustrious Alfred expressly states in his will,* that he had on his accession to the throne summoned a meeting of the most distinguished and learned of his people, to whom he had submitted his title to the crown, and by whose decision he declared himself ready to abide. From their hands he received it, and unquestionably he considered that he thence received the most equitable claim to it. As it was impossible, in days of such anarchy and discord as those of Alfred, to have convened assemblies of the nation at large, who were debased by servitude and ignorance, and dispersed by a barbarous warfare amidst woods and mountains, the Patriot King did every thing that was in his power;

* Vide Testamentum Alfredi adud Asser.

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he convened an assembly of the most distinguished of his subjects, and submitted the justice of his title to their award. His liberal and capacious mind did not consider it dangerous in times of anarchy and confusion to restore to the people their natural inherent rights; he thought that the surest way to win men to social order was by shewing them the blessings of liberty; and when he might have tyrannised over a land of slaves, preferred the glory of reigning over a country of free-men.

Having demonstrated that the principle of the "Sovereignty of the People did exist in some ancient systems of Jurisprudence;" having even pointed out traces of it amidst the unpolished ordinances of our Saxon ancestors; I shall no otherwise attempt to prove its existence in modern governments, than by transcribing one of the Articles which form the Declaration of Rights, prefixed to the Constitution of several American States. It is declared in the preamble to the constitution of Pennsylvania, formed in the year 1776, "That the People of this state have the sole, exclusive,
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and inherent right of governing and regulating the internal policy of the same :

“ That all power being originally inherent in, and consequently derived from, the people ; therefore all officers of government, whether legislative or executive, are their trustees and servants, and at all times accountable to them.

Why should we multiply proofs in a matter so evident ? I have chosen the above extract from the constitution of Pennsylvania, because it is short, plain, and explicit ; but whoever will take the trouble of looking over the constiutions of the other American States, will find abundant instances of the like nature.

I forbear to quote the example of France, because I am aware it may be said that she forms an exception to all established governments ; tho' I think, after what I stated above, this objection cannot well be urged against her as to the point in question— Having said thus much, I shall leave it to every impartial man to decide, whether the principle of the Sovereignty of the People
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has not, for ages, made part of many systems of Jurisprudence.

I will now consider whether it makes a part of the Constitution of England. And in doing this I shall content myself with shewing, from the statement of an author who will not be accused of partiality to the cause of liberty, that this principle was acted on at the Revolution. After the Prince of Orange landed at Torbay, and was joined by the inhabitants of the neighbouring counties, he established for the transaction of business a council, not of the Nobility only, or Members of Parliament, but of all ranks. Thus are we told by Sir John Dalrymple—"He called a general council 'at Sion-house *of all ranks* among the English who were with him, laid James's letter before them and asked their advice." In a nation composed of eight millions of inhabitants, it was impossible that every individual could be in person called on to give his opinion; but we shall uniformly see the Prince of Orange recognising by his conduct the principle that, "the sovereign power was vested in the
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body of the people." James before his flight to France had issued writs for assembling a new Parliament; it was not however by such a measure, but by as general an appeal as possible, to the people at large, that William thought it just and proper to rest the foundation of his authority.* Accordingly we find that, "the same day that news arrived of the King's flight from Rochester, he summoned those who had been members of any of Charles II'd's parliaments, together with the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and Common Council of London, to meet him three days after at St. James's." "This assembly resolved upon an address to the Prince, which contained two important articles: The one that he should, in his own name, call a *convention* of the states to meet on the 22d of January; the other, that in the mean time, he should take upon him the administration of all public affairs." It is clear that this was not the act of a British Parliament; no King, Lords, and Commons were parties to

* Dalrymple's Memoirs.

the deed ; it was founded on the authority of the people, and done with their concurrence. Indeed there was no general assembly of the whole mass of the people ; it would have been an absurdity, an impossibility for such a body to have met for deliberation ; but I will venture to affirm, that had not the will of the nation ratified and confirmed the proceedings of this assembly, had the opinion of the people and of this meeting been different, the former would have triumphed over all opposition and proved itself indisputably sovereign.

But as the individuals of a great nation must in matters of public concern deliberate by means of delegates, there could not, in the state the country then was, be a fairer way of collecting its sentiments, than by assembling a free Convention. This appears most clearly from what Dalrymple says afterwards—" As that part of the Convention which consisted of Commons *had been chosen* by the people and during a popular ferment, the commons were mostly of the Whig party. But as the individuals

individuals had been separated from each other by attendance upon their elections in their different counties, they had formed no common plan of party."

It is then most evident that this was, as far as the nature of things would admit, an appeal to the will of the nation ; and accordingly tho' there were plenty of Tories in the country, few were sent to the convention as Representatives of the People.—Whig principles prevailed, because they were the principles of freedom and the people. The convention proceeded to declare that James had " broken the contract between King and People"—thus was the existence of such a contract fully established. But it will be said, no one word is here of any contract between Parliament and the People. It is true ; and the reason is, that the Parliament not having been oppressors of the People, the words of the Declaration were confined to the point in question—the *words*, I say, were so confined ; but the *spirit* of this Declaration went evidently to say, that there existed a contract between the governors and governed,

verned, between the people and those to whom they had delegated their sovereign power. But it may be replied, this contract was made and created at the Revolution. By no means. Had it been so, James could not have broken it, as it would not have existed till after his abdication. Indeed it is coeval with government; and as it must be allowed that the original contract between King and People, was not less in existence before this Declaration, than after it; so neither does the contract between the governors and governed, here implied, the less exist, because the *words* of the Declaration have not specifically named it.*

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* Even before the Revolution, and during that debasement of mind which took place during the unprincipled reign of Charles II, this fundamental principle of government was admitted. Sir William Temple, who proved no friend to the Revolution, in his *Essay on Government*, written in the year 1762, says, "The ground upon which all Government stands is the consent of the People." To prove which he brings the instance of the Restoration in 1660. "The usurped powers," says he, "thought themselves secure in the strength of an unfoiled army of 60,000

That these were the real sentiments entertained at that time may be proved from Locke, who certainly was as well acquainted with the principles of the Revolution as any one can pretend to be now. Let us hear what he says.—“ Though in a constituted commonwealth, standing upon its own

60,000 men, and in a revenue proportionable, raised by the awe of their forces, though with the mock-forms of legal supplies by pretended Parliaments. Yet we saw them forced to give way to the bent, and current humour of the People, in favour of their ancient and lawful Government ; and this mighty army of a sudden lose their heart and their strength, abandon what they had so long called their cause and their interest, and content themselves to be moulded again into the mass of the people ; and by conspiring with the general humour of the nation, make way for the King's glorious Restoration without a drop of blood drawn, in the end of a quarrel, the beginning and course of which had been so fatal to the kingdom.” There cannot be a more convincing proof than this that all government is founded on the will of the people ; in vain will it be said the Commonwealth was an Usurpation ; it was so only because it contradicted the will of the nation, had it been consonant to it, it must have been a just and legal government.

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basis, and acting according to its own nature, that is, acting for the preservation of the community, there can be but one supreme power, which is the *legislative*, to which all the rest are and must be subordinate ; yet the legislative being only a fiduciary power to act for certain ends, there remains still in the People a supreme power to remove or alter the legislative, when they find the legislative act contrary to the trust reposed in them." Any thing so plain and explicit as this needs no comment ; and I leave it to my readers to judge whether I have proved my second position, " That the principle which vests the Sovereign Power in the People, was acted on at the Revolution, and therefore makes part of the Constitution of England."

Having disposed of the two main questions ; let us recur to the Minister's speech. He asserts that the Parliament of Ireland are competent to decide on the Necessity of an Union with England. Let us see what further arguments he adduces in support of his assertion. He tells us, " whoever denies the competence of the Irish
Parliament

Parliament to the decision of the question, must equally deny the competence of the British Parliament, and of course the validity of the Union between Great Britain and **Ireland**." With regard to the measure here alluded to, peace to its manes, I will not disturb them; I respect the hallowed veil which time and authority have thrown around them.—But when the Minister goes on to say, that, "if this principle of the competency of Parliament to the decision of the matter be allowed, or that Parliament has no legitimate authority to discuss and determine the matter, you will be driven to the acknowledgment of a principle the most dangerous that was ever adopted in any state—I mean the principle that Parliament cannot adopt *any* measure of great importance, without recurring to its constituent and delegating authority for directions."

Scotlan

When the Rt. Hon. Gentleman says this, I do accuse him of mis-stating and misrepresenting the fact. The question is *not* whether Parliament, by its own authority, cannot adopt *some* measures of great importance

portance, but whether it can adopt *every* measure, how great or how important soever. Whether there are not some questions so high and transcendent in their nature, so interwoven with the very ~~existence~~ of the constitution, as not to be decided on by any delegated authority without recurring to the constituent powers. If there be any such question, which exceeds the limits of any constituted authority, surely no man can hesitate to say, that it is the present; which has for its object the annihilation of a national legislature, which goes to make a transfer of the dominion of a people, to foreigners and aliens, whom they have neither formally nor virtually chosen for their governors. Indeed it is precisely stated by Locke, as one of those acts which when attempted by the legislative power, amount to a *Dissolution of Government*. He says, "The delivery of the people into the subjection of a foreign power, either by the prince, or by the legislative, is certainly a *change of the Legislative*, and so a *Dissolution of Government*. For the end why people entered into society being to be preserved one *entire*,

tire, free, and independent society, to be governed by its own laws; this is lost whenever they are given up into the power of another." This is Mr. Locke's opinion, and better authority I know not how to produce. Indeed if the omnipotence of Parliament be once established, it will lead us to consequences much more dreadful and dangerous, than any that can be deduced from the opposite principle. We will admit that the Irish Parliament are competent to unite and incorporate their country with Great Britain, in any manner and on any terms that to them may seem good. We will suppose the Union effected, and the Imperial Parliament sitting in all its majesty at Westminster. I will now ask the advocates for parliamentary omnipotence, what is to hinder our imperial delegates in the plenitude of their power from uniting the Empire of Great Britain and Ireland to the Empire of Germany? from making this and our sister island an incorporate member of the Germanic body? In vain will it be said that an Union of Great Britain and Ireland with the Germanic body would be totally destructive of the prosperity of the state, whereas the proposed Union is conducive to its best interests, is useful and

necessary. This is merely begging the question, and still leaves undecided, Who are to be the judges of this use and this necessity? Again let Mr. Locke answer for me. “ Here ’tis like the common question will be made, *Who shall be judge* whether the Prince or Legislature act contrary to their trust? To this I reply, *The People shall be judge*; for who shall judge whether his trustee or deputy acts well, and according to the trust reposed in him, but he who deposes him, and must, by having deposed him, have still a power to discard him, when he fails in his trust?” After so plain a declaration as this, I can have nothing to add of my own, but leave every man to his own unbiassed judgment. But as it may appear to many presumptuous and little short of treason and blasphemy to impugn the opinions of our “ heaven-born” Minister, even when supported by so great an ally as Mr. Locke; I will produce one other authority, of no less name than the former. In a matter of such import, as I must appeal from the decision of the Minister, I will appeal to the highest and best authority; I will appeal from the William Pitt of the present day, to the late
William

William Pitt of great and glorious memory, to the immortal Earl of Chatham; I will appeal from the degenerate Son, to the illustrious Father.

In the debate which took place in the House of Lords, in 1775, on his motion for recalling the troops from Boston, Lord Chatham, after denying, as he had frequently done before, the *right* of Parliament to tax America, speaks thus—"Resistance to your acts was necessary as it was just; and *your vain declarations of the Omnipotence of Parliament*, and your imperious doctrines of the necessity of submission, will be found equally impotent to convince or to enslave your fellow-subjects in America, who feel that *tyranny*, whether ambitioned by an individual part of the legislature, or *the bodies who compose it, is equally intolerable to British subjects.*" It would be vanity most silly and contemptible to attempt any addition to what I have above transcribed from the speech of the noble Lord, authorised by which, and by my preceding quotations from Locke, I think I may venture to affirm, that the doctrine of a paramount power residing in the people, is true in theory and in practice; that it
not

not only is a part of the British Constitution, but of every lawful government ; and that if ever there be a question which calls for the exercise of that paramount power, it is a question which involves in it the surrender of National Independence ; and that therefore the *People* of Ireland can alone have a right to decide on the Necessity of an Union with England.

I have but one more word to say. It is with regard to the dangerous tendency of the principle here attempted to be established. I cannot allow it to be a fair or sufficient reason for condemning any principle, because it is dangerous: every powerful agent in the physical or moral world is dangerous. Moralists are hoarse with declaiming on the danger of the passions ; and 'tis true their violence sometimes produces most fatal effects. But while every schoolboy is taught to enlarge on their baneful consequences, every man of reflection knows, that from them is derived every virtue, as well as every vice ; that every improvement in knowledge, civilization, arts, or commerce, may be traced to the same source ; and without them, man would be merely the lifeless lump of clay, into which Prometheus
breathed

breathed the “*divinæ particulam auræ.*”—
In the physical world how often do we accuse things necessary to our existence, of being dangerous, because they are powerful? Yet when the hurricane sweeps off a West-Indian plantation, or the element of fire buries, in a bed of liquid lava, Herculaneum or Pompeia, we cannot wish to destroy these terrible agents, without desiring at the same time our own destruction.

I have merely mentioned this to shew that the Minister's eloquence is more to be admired than his sound reasoning, his words more than his arguments. But is this principle, which Mr. Pitt so reprobates, really dangerous? Another passage from Locke will decide this matter. “It will perhaps be said, that the people being ignorant and always discontented, to lay the foundation of government in the unsteady opinion and uncertain humour of the people, is to expose it to certain ruin; and *no government will be able long to subsist*, if the people may set up a new legislative whenever they take offence at the old one. To this I answer, quite the contrary. People are not so easily got out of their old forms, as some are apt to suggest. They are hardly to be prevailed

prevailed with to amend the acknowledged faults in the frame they have been accustomed to. And if there be any original defects, or adventitious ones introduced by time or corruption, 'tis not an easy thing to get them changed, even when all the world sees there is an opportunity for doing it. But 'twill be said, this hypothesis lays a ferment for frequent rebellion. To which I answer, no more than any other hypothesis. For when the people are made miserable, and find themselves exposed to the ill usage of arbitrary power, cry up their governors, as much as you will, for sons of Jupiter; let them be sacred and divine, descended, or authorised from heaven; give them out for whom or what you please, the same will happen. The people, generally ill treated, and contrary to right, will be ready on any occasion to ease themselves of a burthen, that sits heavy upon them. They will wish and seek for the opportunity, which in the change, weakness, and accidents of human affairs, seldom delays long to present itself. He must have lived but a little while in the world, who has not seen examples of this in his time; and he has read very little, who cannot produce

produce examples of it in all sorts of governments of the world."

Thus I have endeavoured to establish the truth of a principle, which Mr. Pitt declares to be false. I have also endeavoured to shew that it has no evil tendency ; and tho' he stigmatises its defenders as " the enemies of the human race," I cannot be uneasy at this censure, as by it he classes me with Mr. Locke and the Earl of Chatham.

I think it cannot but be remarked by every impartial observer, that during the course of this examination, I have not once recurred to those systems of modern philosophy, from whence Mr. Pitt deduces the origin of those principles which have " tinctured the opinions of some leading characters." I have drawn my proofs chiefly from the plain, simple, clear, and manly understanding of the last century ; and therefore whatever censure I may deserve in other respects, cannot be accused of propagating any novel doctrine, or principles drawn from the schools of French philosophy. This cannot, I think, be objected to me, as I have drawn my proofs, not from the works of French Jacobins, but English Whigs

Whigs, with whose opinions to associate my own, will ever be my glory and pride.

As far therefore as I am capable of judging, the Union of England and Ireland is not necessary ; but whether it be or not, the people of Ireland are the proper judges of this necessity.

Indeed if the opinion of a great Law-Officer be adopted, viz. " That Ireland must be treated as *a conquered country* ; if this idea is to be acted upon, I have nothing more to say ; argument is at an end. But it remains for the Irish to say, whether they are a conquered people, whether they are a land of slaves. If they acquiesce in this idea of the gentleman above alluded to, I can only say, that so far from wishing to incorporate with them, I should wish immediately to quit all connection with them ; for (to make use of the strong and energetic words of Lord Chatham) " in whatever part of the empire slavery is established, whether it be in America or Ireland, or here at home, it is a disease which spreads by contact, and soon reaches from the extremities to the heart."

FINIS.

